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LITERATURE AND DEMOCRACY

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RIGHT:

LITERATURE AND DEMOCRACY

Study is only a serious form of gossip—E. M. Forster.

And I spread the gossip. It is the gossiping, as gossiping usually is, of the small man about his betters. Ezra Pound: 'The concept of genius as akin to madness has been carefully fostered by the inferiority complex of the public'. And again from the 'A. B. C. of Reading': 'Jealousy of vigorous living men has perhaps led in all times to a deformation of criticism and a distorted glorification of the past'. Or T. S. Eliot: 'You are hardly likely to develop tradition except where the bulk of the population is relatively so well off when it is that it has no incentive or pressure to move about. The population should be homogeneous; when two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious or both to become adulterate. What is still more important is unity of religious background; and reasons of race and religion contrive to make any large number of free-thinking Jews undesirable... And a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated'. After 'After Strange Gods', 'The Idea of a Christian Society': 'I should not expect the rulers of a Christian state to be philosophers, or to be able to keep before their minds at every moment of decision the maxim that the life of virtue is the purpose of human society—*virtuosa... vita est congregationis humanae finis*; but they would neither be self-educated, nor have been submitted in their youth merely to that system of miscellaneous or specialised instruction which passes for education: they would have received a Christian education... These countries (the United States and the Dominions) might appear to be committed from their origin to a neutral form of society... But I believe that if these countries are to develop a positive culture of their own, and not remain merely derivatives of Europe, they can only proceed either in the direction of a pagan or of a Christian society.' Or D. H. Lawrence: (from what Dr. Leavis called 'that neglected critical mater-

piece', 'Studies in Classic American Literature'): America, 'the land of Thou shalt not. Only the first commandment is: Thou shalt not presume to be a master. Hence Democracy'; or from the poetry:

'Most men, even unfallen, can only live
by the transmitted gleam from the faces of vivider men
who look into the eyes of the gods,
And worship is the joy of the gleam from the eyes of the gods
And the robot is the denial of the same,
even the denial that there is any gleam';

or in a letter, (to Bertrand Russell): 'What we must hasten to prevent is this democratic party from getting into power... The deadly hydra now is the hydra of Equality. Liberty, Equality and Fraternity is the three-fanged serpent. You must have a government based upon good, better and best'.

There are three gossips; each has his weakness apart from the gossiping. But each is an individual talent reviewing the tradition, stock-taking in the face of bankruptcy. Pound is authoritarian,—malgré lui. He is against the mob: 'There is no democracy in the arts', 'Great art is NEVER popular to begin with': these are the sentiments which echo like a refrain through the letters. This attitude, and his natural talent for the lyric bring about his blindness to the drama, and his contempt for its vulgarity, its mobness. Chaucer, the European he prefers to Shakespeare, the Englishman, the latter making 'sixteenth century plays out of fifteenth century news'. 'As to the relative merits of Chaucer and Shakespeare, English opinion has been bamboozled for centuries by a love of the stage, the glamour of the theatre, the love of bombastic rhetoric, and of sentimentalising over actors and actresses; these, plus the national laziness and unwillingness to make the least effort, have completely obscured the values'. Where there is any greatness in Shakespeare's plays, it must either lie in the histories, 'which form the true English EPOS', or in the fact that they were of aristocratic beginnings: 'Shakespeare was Lord Somebody's players, and the Elizabethan drama, as distinct from the long defunct religious plays, was a court affair'. His idea of the literary tradition, (to which the Cantos are a short-hand guide), is reached not only from a rare critical

perspicacity, but from an intense personal need.

The oeuvre of Eliot, like that of Pound, is a kind of *biographia literaria*. Like Coleridge, his best poem comes from his reading; criticism paves the way for poetry. The study of Marvell and the Metaphysicals leads to 'The Waste Land', 'Lancelot Andrewes' to the Song for Simeon and Journey of the Magi, Dante to 'Ash Wednesday'. Eliot can be a most deceptively (and deliberately) evasive man. He is not only a 'silent poet', but also at times a silent critic. Kathleen Nott reprimands him for his poetic evasiveness: 'when we decipher, as we so often do, another piece of Mr. Eliot's deliberate mosaic of quotation, we experience some, no doubt, irrational disappointment, because after all we were unconsciously looking for Eliot'; and then for his critical evasiveness: 'Literary criticism, (Eliot had said), should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint', but is it not remarkable that this considerable amateur of the Church Fathers has nothing to say about theology, except allusively in his verse, until he blossoms into full orthodoxy?' Behind the silence lies Eliot's idea that 'poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but the escape from emotion', upon which Kathleen Nott comments: 'but to escape or rather to try to escape, from one's emotions implies that one ceases in the end to know what they mean oneself, they become irrecoverably private'. And at the crucial period, the time of his conversion, Eliot's thought is at its most private. He has lowered upon it his rose-patterned altar-cloth: 'shrouded in sacred silence let it rest'.

The change in his criticism after the conversion is marked, and has been remarked upon by, among others, Dr. Leavis and Miss Bradbrook. Dr. Leavis says that the later criticism shows 'less discipline of thought and emotion, less purity of interest, less power of sustained devotion and less courage than before'. Miss Bradbrook agrees. And if one is referring strictly to literary criticism one must also. But 'After Strange Gods' is more than that. These words, which, again evasively, Mr. Eliot has since tried to eat, hang in the subsequent silence; they are of central importance and, coming from the 'second' period, all the more meaningful. They are as personal (and as pathetic) as the day-mares of Gilbert Pinford, or the *cri de coeur* of 'Waiting for

Godot' or the opening of Arnold's 1882 Liverpool Address.

Lawrence shares with Pound and Eliot this ingrained distrust of democracy. He and Eliot are alike in some ways: he turns loose his emotions, Eliot escapes from his, but the emotions are there in both. This is what makes Eliot's comments on Lawrence not quite honest. (He was answered by Dr. Leavis in 'The Common Pursuit', and both have been answered, in his effective kill-joy fashion, by Graham Hough in his 'Dark Sun'. The gossip, it seems, has stopped, the sun set). Eliot on Lawrence might be Eliot on Eliot,—at least in part. Hence the evasion. He notes three 'aspects' of Lawrence: 'The first is the ridiculous: his lack of sense of humour, a certain snobbery, a lack not so much of information as of the critical faculty which education should give, and an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking'. Second, 'there is the extraordinarily keen sensibility and capacity for profound intuition,—intuition from which he commonly drew the wrong conclusions'. Third: 'a distinct sexual morbidity'.

True or not, Lawrence certainly has more 'warmth' than Eliot, and made an attempt to draw closer to his fellow men,—and failed:

When I am in a great city, I know that I despair.

I know there is no hope for us, death waits, it is useless to care
For oh, the poor people, that are flesh of my flesh,
I, that am flesh of their flesh,

When I see the iron hooked into their faces,
their poor, their fearful faces,

I scream in my soul, for I know I cannot
take the iron hooks out of their faces, that make them so drawn
nor cut the invisible wires of steel that pull them
back and forth to work,
back and forth to work,
like fearful and corpse-like fishes hooked and being played
by some malignant fisherman on an unseen shore
where he does not choose to land them yet, hooked fishes
of the factory world'.

'Scream in my soul': Lawrence too could keep mum. Like Pound and Eliot his oeuvre has unity, a personal 'oneness': the fiction is a biography

literaria, to which the letters are footnotes and the poems an appendix. The criticism and fiction merge: he found his religion in New Mexico, ('curious that it should be in America of all places, that a European should really experience religion'), and this finds its place in 'The Plumed Serpent'. The criticism against democracy finds its place in 'Kangaroo', where its principle spokesman is Somers: 'Europe is established on the instinct of authority: Thou shalt. The only alternative is anarchy'. But deeper than external authority lies the instinctive man-woman feeling. These feelings find their place in 'Women in Love' and 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. The idea, for instance, of (in a letter to Witter Bynner) this: 'The leader of men is a back number. After all, at the back of the hero is the militant ideal, and the militant ideal, or the ideal militant seems to me also a cold egg... The leader-cum-follower relationship is a bore. And the new relationship will be some sort of tenderness, sensitive, between men and men and between men and women', finds its place in the short stories. 'The militant ideal or the ideal militant', an ideal, like any ideal, being anathema to Lawrence. 'The ideal is always evil, no matter what ideal it be'.

Here is the individual talent undermining the whole tradition. He clears away the debris of Western civilisation left by the First World War, not even 'shoring fragments against his ruins', but clearing a space to make room for the phoenix. Among the debris is democracy. Lawrence is not a systematic thinker. 'In his untidiness', (the voice is, unmistakably, Hough's), 'his continual breaking off from whatever he is supposed to be doing to exhort, denounce or explore, he is akin to the Victorian prophets Ruskin or Carlyle'. The irony with Lawrence is that we must regard him as one of the greatest of modern thinkers; the paradox being that to attack thought one must think.

'Ruskin or Carlyle'. There is our guide. We must face the Victorians, faced with democracy. Each of our non-democratic 'talents' has his Victorian allegiance. Their common reverence for words for which our time will be revered, goes back to Coleridge. Lawrence's distrust of words, Joyce's obsession, Richards' meanings of meaning, Eliot's 'intolerable wrestle', Empson's 'ambiguities' find their beginnings

in Coleridge. Ezra Pound's insistence that 'the job of a serious writer is to dissociate the *meaning* of one word from that of some other which the poor boobs think means the same thing' is an echo of Coleridge's 'desynonymisation'. (Desynonymisation is not democratic). And Coleridge was a Victorian. If the attitudes of his 'Philosophical Lectures' do not provide enough evidence of his Victorianism, then it will be enough to note that the Victorians overlooked his true greatness. 'Opposites attract' and he was too close to them, in time and temperament for them to see or want to see his essential values. (It is a common phenomenon in literary criticism).

Eliot has something in him of Emerson; more of Arnold. (Their careers show some similarities, both like Sainte-Beuve; they have the same weaknesses of style). Lawrence has something of Carlyle; Pound something of Ruskin. Each has reacted against the Victorians, but this is only further confirmation of their true literary heritage, 'I in my folly am the world I condemn'. We need not be surprised, in spite of the literary historians and Professor Lewis' 'De Descriptione Temporum', that we are Victorians. On the contrary, it should be rather comforting. We shall discover between the Victorian and our contemporary writers: a common distrust, even fear, of democracy. Is it too much to say a 'fascism'? George Orwell did not think so. 'Fascism,' he wrote in 'The Road to Wigan Pier', 'as it appears in the intellectual is a sort of mirror-image — not actually of Socialism but of a plausible travesty of Socialism... Some such attitude is already quite clearly discernible in writers like Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Roy Campbell etc., in most of the Roman Catholic writers and many of the Douglas Credit group, in certain popular novelists, and even, if one looks below the surface, in so superior conservative highbrows like Eliot and his countless followers'. Orwell might prove to be one of the most earnest, honest and pure writers of our time. If the writer qua writer is to be considered as the spiritual dynamo of society, as an 'outsider', (with Colin Wilson's Fascist overtones for that label there), then Orwell might be the most 'inside' of recent writers: and there is his strength and weakness. The writer qua writer might have fascist (small 'f') leanings. (Each of those we have considered, however, has been at

some time given a capital). And fascism might be a catharsis in an age too tragic for Tragedy. Writers compose a small segment of society, a group, a *fascio*, which is most unsafe in a democracy. Perhaps our title ought to be 'Literature or Democracy', but, at this stage, that would be begging the question.

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Democracy 'means the despair of finding any Heroes to govern you, and being contented putting up with the want of them' (Carlyle: quoted Bertrand Russell: 'In Praise of Idleness')

England has never been democratic; even now she retains an aristocratic quality and maintains a leisured class. And, as Russell says: 'without the leisure class, mankind would never have emerged from barbarism'. And it is the clash of class interests and aspirations and the individual struggle within the social hierarchy which have been responsible for a good deal of our literature. Shelly expresses this well in an (untypically) memorable couplet:

Most men are cradled into poesy by wrong,

They learn in suffering what they teach in song.

From Langland to Lawrence this has been so. (And the situation, as we shall see, has not changed much since Lawrence.) The first English 'Utopia' was an exposure of Tudor economic abuses, but like the first 'Utopian', Plato, More, far from advocating complete equality, hints at the dangers. England owes much to the classical tradition and to Aristotle, Aristotle as political theorist: the definer of democracy as 'government of the many in their own interests'. George Orwell writes of a particular segment of English society as 'a sort of world-within-a-world where everyone is equal, a small squalid democracy-perhaps the nearest thing to a democracy that exists in England',—the tramps. Indeed a leisure class.

Ages of absolutism may have their dangers, but they have their art; they may be tragic, but they have their Tragedy. 'Most men', says Sir George Sansom, 'will prefer even harsh government to anarchy... and absolute monarchy was a stage, an inevitable and indeed a beneficent stage, in the growth of modern societies'. The age of Elizabeth produced Shakespeare; the age of Louis XIV, Corneille and Racine. The

proper study of the Renaissance was the study of the 'vivid men'; (hence the rise of portraiture), and, to a great extent in England, of a vivid woman, Gloriana. It is the age of the epic, or the attempted epic: Spenser, Daniel, the younger Milton, Shakespeare. Shakespeare is the success, the history plays from 'King John' to 'Henry VIII' forming the 'true English EPOS'. It is natural that his career should end there, with the christening of Elizabeth, and the last years spent in silent retirement. Or it may be that the 'Tempest' is the last play, a postscript, an index to the histories. In the 'Tempest', after all, we have, as Wilson Knight says in 'The Sovereign Flower', ('A Royal Propaganda', the last chapter of his last book on Shakespeare), 'Gonzalo's idea of a Utopian commonwealth... shown, by a neat stroke of ironic dialogue, to be parasitic on sovereignty'. The Divine Right of Kings is the Divine Riving Right of the Artist. (Socrates, however 'anti', acknowledges as much). And if, as we presuppose, there is this connection between political and literary 'kinds', then subsequent English politico-literary history can easily be traced.

The loss of absolutism and the political squabbles of the seventeenth century cause the loss of tragedy and the abortive epics of Cowley and D'Avenant, the later Milton, *recherches de temps perdus*. (Epics are never contemporary, a naturally 'timeless' genre). The Restoration brings a brief restoration, but the emphasis (*vide* 'Cato') is crampingly political. We have instead, in the eighteenth century, the so-called 'rise' of the novel, and some scholars, notably Dr. Tillyard, have tried, in the wrong way but for the right reason, to post-date the novel by looking for its 'epic strain'.

The trouble is that one can look for almost anything in the novel and find it. (I digress here, claiming the prerogative of the gossip). There is the novel as 'mock heroic' in Fielding, allegory in Bunyan, (or, if you like, Langland), romance in Scott, (or Chaucer?); one can see it as drama or painting with Henry James, or as chronicle with Muir. The novel begins as correspondence, or journal or peregrination; it continues as gossip, tract, satire, psychology, myth; it is difficult to see where it ends. It is a nebulous concept, and criticism of the novel is notoriously slack. The great limitation with criticism of the novel is

that Aristotle could not and did not write it and that Henry James could and did. The novel as novel (if there really is such a thing) begins with Jane Austen, and, being a vehicle for gossip, has steadily attracted the ladies. The essential difficulties concerning the novel can be seen in the correspondence of Henry James and H. G. Wells, and their incompatible attitudes. James suggested to Wells that he join the Royal Society of Literature. Wells refused: 'This world of ours, I mean the world of creative and representative work we do, is, I am convinced, best anarchic. James replied, (and these words of an expatriate are interesting in view of our central topic,): 'Oh, *patriotism!* — that mine, the mere paying guest in the house, should have its credit more at heart than its unnatural, its proud and perverse son'. Wells later, however, became International President of the P. E. N. Club. So much is suggested in their relationship. 'Anarchic': the novel is anarchic, or at best/worst, democratic, the least formal, the least pure, the least satisfying, the least classical of genres. The age of Victoria sees the rise of the novel and the rise of democracy. And it is not to the novelists but to the other writers that we go for the main attack. The Victorians were novelists...

But much more. The Victorian novel may be an expression of social grievance, and a vehicle for social reform, but its subtitle is 'the two nations'. The century opens with high hopes: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive/But to be young was very heaven'; it closes in despair, in twilight macabre. Here are the flows of democratic feeling: the French Revolution, the Luddite and later Risings, the extended franchise, the Education Act, the Fabians; but there is ebb as well as flow: the century produced Nietzsche as well as Marx.

These is an air of escapism about that interesting fin-de-siècle period; the 'escapes' of Edward Lear into 'nonsense', Samuel Butler to a Nowhere-Utopia, Pater to the Renaissance, Morris and Rossetti to 'Merrie Englande', Gilbert and Sullivan to comic-opera, Lewis Carroll to an 'ambiguous' child-world. There are the 'escapists' into degeneracy: Wilde, Swinburne. There are the travellers: Morris to Iceland, Arnold and Hearn to Japan, Dickens to America, all (you will notice) the most unlikely places. Tennyson wished to travel, but his

wife would not let him. Easier travel brings the Americans to Europe (James, Poe, Hawthorne, Pound, Stein, Eliot) seeking their spiritual enrichment, as, in our own day, English writers have gone to America, also seeking enrichment. The '90's have this 'escapist' character. From what were they escaping? Democracy. Who issues their (metaphorical) visas? Carlyle. His is the rubbery stamp in their spiritual passports, as it is his stamp, smudged but indelible, which can be seen on the face of later Victorian England.

And not only England, but America and Japan. His influence is somewhat accidental, coinciding with the second opening of Japan and of America to European thought. (In a way the most unpropitious of all times). The influence of Carlyle in Japan was as damaging on thought as on style (see Nitobe). And he was as Victorian as Samuel Smiles: he notes 'the folly of that impossible Precept, Know Thyself, till it be translated into this possible one, know what thou canst work at',-that is, as Victorian as Lawrence. 'Love, not Pleasure is the Everlasting Yea'. For our purposes, 'Heroes and Hero-worship' (1841) is the important reference, the cult of the hero as the bulwark against equalitarianism: the hero as Divinity, as Prophet, as Poet, as Man of Letters, and, we might add, as Carlyle.

His thought is a strange mixture of German idealism and Scottish puritanism, his character a gnawing self-assertion and self-hate. He is vulnerable, but those who laugh at cannot laugh away. To Emerson, his vituperation seemed to be 'the rhetoric of a highly virtuous gentleman who swears'; to Nietzsche, his writing were 'pessimism after undigested meals'. But upon both he was a profound influence. 'The hero taken as Divinity, the hero taken as Prophet, then next the hero taken only as Poet; does it not look as if our estimate of the Great Man, epoch after epoch, were continually diminishing? We take him first for a god, then for one god-inspired, and now in the next stage of it, his most miraculous word gains from us only the recognition that he is a Poet, beautiful verse-maker, man of genius or such like! It looks so; but I persuade myself that intrinsically it is not so. If we consider well it will perhaps appear that in man still there is the same altogether peculiar admiration for the Heroic Gift, by what name soever called,

that there at any time was' (His argument is specious: what should be a question is a statement. We might note the vagueness, the 'I persuade myself', the 'if we consider well'). It may be only wishful thinking that the hero will reappear after his Victorian eclipse, but he expresses a general opinion of that time and a hope, (if Ezra Pound be thought correct) still shared by many 'The study of literature', says Pound, 'is hero-worship. It is a refinement, or, if you will, a perversion of that primitive religion'.

One could, like the sixteenth century literary critic, bring in 'an army of approvers'. There are the other dreamers of dreams, Ruskin and Morris, who, although flirting with socialist ideas, have some affinity with Carlyle. Ruskin, 'by nature and instinct Conservative, loving old things because they are old, and hating new ones merely because they are new', was, however a pioneer of the Workers' Educational Association. He wanted 'to keep the fields of England green and her cheeks red', and his remedy for social evils was a planned society, 'founded on a perception of the connection of all branches of art with each other' and the whole with life. But behind his social work is an innate aristocratic distance: 'taste is not only a part and index of morality — it is the only morality', and an overt anti-democratic feeling: 'the first duty of every man in the world is to find his true master, and for their own good, submit to him, and to find his true inferior, and, for that inferior's good, conquer him'. And, there is a limit to Morris' social philanthropy. He sees the evils of society and would like to rectify them, but, in some ways, it goes against the grain:

 'Dreamer of dreams born out of my due time,

 Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?'

and the temptation to escape:

 'Forget six counties overhung with smoke,

 Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,

 Forget the spreading of the hideous town',

escape into an Earthly Paradise. And Morris' Utopia, like Butler's, answers first a personal need. His is as much of the Home Counties as Butler's is of New Zealand. And behind the Utopia is the need to satisfy one's craving for art: 'it is not possible to dissociate art from

morality, politics and religion'. But in a democracy it is. There's the rub.

These dreamers must join Professor Willey's 'group of honest doubters', and there is their true milieu. With them must go Matthew Arnold, not always so honest. It is not surprising that Arnold has been attacked, especially by the Americans. His own attacks on the Americans and American democracy are many and not always tactful. He never loses an opportunity to air his anti-democratic views, and where there is none he finds it. So, towards the end of his essay on Amiel, he says: 'Space is failing me, but I must yet find room for a less indirect criticism of democracy ...' He had visited America in 1883, and was never tired of making public his horror and disgust. The examples are numerous. (There are three major ones in Kenneth Allott's 'Five Uncollected Essays', a strange title!), but the classic example for me is the essay on Milton.

The essay originally was an address delivered in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster, on the 13th. of February (a Friday?) 1888, at the unveiling of a Memorial Window to one of Milton's wives presented by a Mr. Childs of Philadelphia, by whom, in his American tour, Arnold had been entertained. Arnold begins by quoting (possibly) Emerson: 'The most eloquent voice of our century uttered shortly before leaving the world a warning cry against the 'Anglo-Saxon contagion'' (Note the Arnoldian touches: the superlative, the squeamish euphemism, the pompous 'uttered', the journalistic 'warning cry',-this essay is a masterpiece of hypocrisy). He believes that Emerson (?) had 'in view *no doubt* ... us and our colonies, but the United States still more'. (My italics. There *is* a doubt about the speaker, let alone about what he meant! Emerson had, in a Boston lecture, deplored 'the secondariness and aping of foreign and English life that runs through this country',-not really the same thing. There is no reference to an 'Anglo-Saxon contagion' in Emerson and the phrase has not been traced at all. I believe Arnold might have invented it). He continues: 'the *average man* is too much a religion' in America, and, having attacked America, he praises the American for his gift. There follows the reference to Milton's 'great style', which he had from nature, 'to

that bent of nature for inequality which to the worshippers of the average man is so unacceptable'. He ends as he began, schoolboyishly: the conclusion begins: 'Milton is English, this master in the great style of the ancients is English... All the Anglo-Saxon contagion, all the flood of Anglo-Saxon commonness, beats vainly against the great style but cannot shake it, and has to accept its triumph... he, and his hearers on both sides of the Atlantic, are English, and will remain English:

Sermonem Ausonii patrium moresque tenebunt

The English race overspreads the world, and at the same time the ideal of an excellence the most high and the most rare abides a possession with it forever'. It is easy to find fault with Arnold, and, in my position, necessary. Vagueness, naivete, 'enthusiasm', the self-hypnotising, punch-drunk prose: these are obvious. What I point to here is illustrative of one all-too-common approach of the English to America: the patronising, supercilious approach, the biting of the hand that feeds one. It is well to notice it, so we can recognise it (as we must) later.

One must sympathise with Arnold. He was a bad speaker. ('Mr. Matthew Arnold combines in himself all the possible faults of a lecturer' is the testimony of Sir Lepel Griffin). And on the day before this speech he was uncertain of himself. He wrote to his elder daughter: 'I hate delivering things, and I hate to have a subject found for me instead of occurring itself to my mind; still I think the Milton will read pretty well in print'. Moreover, as Allott, says: 'his consistency is not primarily a matter of logic; it springs fairly obviously from a similarity of approach and tone, and even more from the sometimes almost monotonous recurrence natural (in the sense of 'not unexpected') in a man of Arnold's temperament and upbringing'. But his message was timely and right.

One can see the pathos of the man in the Liverpool Address of 1888. (Perhaps now the parallel I drew between Arnold and Eliot becomes clearer). He spoke at the opening of new buildings at the University of Liverpool, and took the place of Lord Derby who had failed to go. He began: 'You have in his (Lord Derby's) stead, many

people would tell you, a nearly worn-out man of letters, with one nostrum for practical application, his nostrum of public schools for the middle classes, and with a frippery of phrases about sweetness and light, seeing things as they really are, knowing the best that has been thought and said in the world, which never had very much meaning, and have now quite lost the gloss and charm of novelty'. He must be partly responsible for the blunting of his message, but it was timely and right.

Emerson attacked Carlyle; William James, (for one) attacked Arnold. 'The trouble about Matthew', he said, 'which sets so many against him is the entirely needless priggishness of his tone...' And the phenomenon of the Englishman visiting (and criticising) America became almost a theme of the contemporary American fiction. (See, for example, Howells' 'Rise of Silas Lapham'). Carlyle may have been Germanic, Arnold may have been Frenchified, but when they are faced with the 'problem' of America they are unmistakably, stubbornly British. It is the same with most Englishmen. We must be on our guard. But let us see the Americans themselves, and the American writer in his democracy.

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'The Puritanism of Scotland became that of England, of New England'. (Carlyle).

But first things first. There is an optimism about the American, so with the consequent innocence, they are more vulnerable than the European, with his defensive barbed wire (or barbed tongue) of cynicism. New England was to be the place 'where the Lord would create a new heaven and a new earth, new churches and a new Commonwealth together; Jefferson spoke of 'God's American Israel' (The natural parallel is Ireland in the late nineteenth century: see Howarth's 'Irish Writers 1880-1940). Whitman sees:

'A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and branching
A new race dominating previous ones and grander far with new
contests,
New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions and arts,
These my voice announcing — I will sleep no more but arise,
You oceans that have been calm within me! how I

Feel you, fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented waves and storms.

And Melville ('White Jacket'): We Americans are the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time' or (quoted by Harry Levin in his excellent 'Power of Blackness'): 'We are of all time and with all nations we divide our inheritance. On this Western hemisphere all nations and people are forming into one federated whole; and there is a future which shall see the estranged children of Adam restored as to the old hearthstone in Eden'. Mark Twain's Yankee: 'I was from Connecticut, whose Constitution declares: 'that all political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are formed on their authority and instituted for their benefit; and that they have *at all times* an undeniable right to alter *their form of government* in such a manner as they may think expedient'. And William Stoughton: 'God hath sifted a nation that he might send choice grain into this wilderness'. America in full of Utopias, fact or fiction: the Brook Farm Experiment, Bellamy's 'Looking Backward', Howells' 'Traveller from Altraria', Jack London's 'Iron Heel' 'Hawthorne's' Blithedale Romance', the Oneida Community, the Unitary House group, (on East 14th Street), Harris' 'Brotherhood of the New Life', the Icarians, Judd's 'Margaret', Poe's 'Symzonia', and so on ad Utopia. America has these Utopias without being one. (One does not write Utopias in Utopia). The line must be drawn.

Emerson and Thoreau did not join Book Farm; Melville's 'Mardi' must be put alongside 'White Jacket', Whitman's theory (of the Common Man) 'is a theory of inequality as well as a theory of equality'.ⁱⁱ

Something had gone wrong. 'The future', as Marcus Cunliffe has said, 'is America's favourite tense'. But what of the past? First things first.

America was perhaps founded on a misconception. Before their boats had touched the New World, the pilgrims were told to remember the Old. John Winthrop, on board the Arbella, reminded his fellow-passengers: 'in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in subjection'. Hardly good news for the would-be Israelites. And one of the first Americans,

Cotton Hooker, proclaimed: 'Democracy, I do not conceive that ever God did ordain as a fit government either for church or state'. Here is an unmistakable echo: Cotton Hooker from Richard, (and later, from Elyot to Eliot). For colonial America was an Elizabethan enterprise, and, more specifically, the ward of Elizabethan Cambridge. A. L. Rowse (to whose 'The Elizabethans and America' I am indebted in this paragraph), says: 'The religion, and thereby the mentality, of New England was essentially the product of Elizabethan Cambridge. When one considers the formative influence of that upon America, I suppose one must regard it, along with nuclear physics,ⁱⁱⁱ as the cardinal contribution of Cambridge to the making of the modern world'. Moreover, the first legislature of the New World, that of Massachusetts, was the opposite of democratic: 'At the first meeting of the General Court, consisting of exactly six Assistants beside the two chief magistrates it was decided, in the direct violation of charter terms, that the Governor and Deputy-Governor be elected out of the Assistants, by the Assistants. In other words, the first Board of Assistants, not one half the legal number, arrogated to themselves, complete legislative, executive and judicial power'. The English always become more English when they leave England.

'America', says Holbrook Jackson, 'which had the chance of being the birthplace of a New World, may yet be the death-bed of the Old'. Why? Perhaps one must speak of New England, not America. The latter is too large and unwieldy. And nothing of much consequence has been produced outside New England. But one must take into account the effect of size upon the American mind. It is behind Thomas Wolfe's appetite. He wrote to Scott Fitzgerald: 'Well don't forget Scott that a great writer is not only a leaver-outer but also a putter-inner, and that Shakespeare and Cervantes and Dostoievsky were great putter-inners, greater putter-inners in fact than taker-outers and will be remembered for what they put in,-remembered, I venture to say, as long as M. Flaubert will be remembered for what he left out'. (One would like to have Henry James' opinion on 'Look Homeward Angel').

And size is behind Whitman's:

'see ploughmen ploughing farm,- see miners digging

mines,- see, the numberless factories,
see, mechanics busy at their benches with tools,-
see from among them superior judges, philosophes,
Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses'.^{iv}

But conversely it is a narrowness and a shrinking that must be noticed: the present participle, the generalisation, the 'list' gives the expansiveness; the repetitions ('ploughman ploughing', 'miners... mines' 'drest... dresses') give the contraction, the whole hinged with the 'see'. 'The Leaves of Grass' is a breathing-in and a breathing-out; it is alive, but behind and through its expanse is a shrinking man; 'song of myself', a Puritan introspection, a 'sublimated', (in Huxley's words) 'sexual mysticism'. That is the man who 'did as much to ruin American poetry and prose as any single influence in America' (Bewley), the man who, with Emily Dickinson, 'wrote as though no one had written poetry before'.

The Puritanism is innate and must be reckoned with. In England, Puritanism was a check and one end of the see-saw social equilibrium; there it checked the aristocracy. In America it had nothing to check, and did evil instead of good. For without an enemy, the Puritan will gnaw his own vitals. Puritanism in America had led to the levelling down, the planeing away to the plain man, the obsessions, the sadism, the narrowness, the self-castigation, l'héautontimorouménos:

'Je suis la plaie et le couteau!
Je suis le soufflet et la joue!
Je suis les membres et la roue,
Et la victime et le bourreau'.

(Baudelaire's translations of Poe have their relevance here). Here is the Salem witch-hunt, Ahab, Hawthorne. Here is the puritan spirit which, in Kathleen Nott's words, (the reference, interestingly enough, is Eliot) 'is always overconcerned with 'greatness', a concern which masks an excessive self-assertion'. And a Puritan is as much at home in a democracy as a centipede in summer. Mencken equates them: 'both get their primal essence out of the inferior man's fear and hatred of his betters'. He adds: 'What it (American society) lacks is aristocratic disinterestedness, born of aristocratic security'. American writing

suffers then from these handicaps ; it is provincial, not to say, incestuous.

There is in Concord discordance ; New England is older than Old. It seemed an ideal place for the setting up of a new, independent and exclusively American culture. Small, beautiful, quiet. Boston seemed to have all the Spenglerian qualities for a 'culture-city'. And so it proved. (We judge of the best). But what of this 'new' culture, Whitman's 'new politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions and arts'? The soil was ready for the growth of 'Americanism': Ingersoll and Channing had planted ; it remained for the Concord group to reap the harvest. Emerson knew well what was wanted ; he advocated a new idiom, even the use of the colloquial, 'for whatever draws on the language of conversation will not be so easily imitated, but will speak as the stream flows'. American-English was to be inimitable. (Would that it were, but no!) This new language was not to be. Until 1914, Americans were writing Jacobean prose, preserved intact, (though not in alcohol) like the Elizabethan songs in the Alleghanies. 'America', said Stephen Gwynn, (and an Irishman should know), 'will never, can never be a nation till its language is no longer recognisable as English,- (is it recognisable?) till its English differs as much from the language of England as German differs from Dutch'. Would Emerson agree? That is not important. But language to the American writer is a crucial matter, something he must (but usually does not) nurse more carefully than others. Let us take two examples, for this language problem has wide ramifications.

Our first book is 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'. Harriet Beecher Stowe describes the 'library' in Miss Ophelia's New England home : 'In the family 'keeping room' as it is termed, he (the reader) will remember the staid, respectable old bookcase, with its glass-doors where Rollin's History, Milton's 'Paradise Lost', Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' and Scott's Family Bible stand by side in decorous order, with multitudes of other books, equally solemn and respectable'. Her tone is provincial ('as it is termed'), mocking ('solemn and respectable'), prim, shocked. But Mrs. Stowe need not have been shocked : her own style shows unmistakably her own reading : Bunyan, the Bible, Shakespeare. She had the gifts of sympathy and simplicity and irony. She had a good

ear, ('the singer appeared to make up the song to his own pleasure, generally hitting on rhyme, without much attempt at reason') and her attempt at negro speech is less shallow than her symbolism or denouement. But one cannot find the essential American idiom here, because she has one eye on England,— England as symbol, and the language of England. (The description of the old-fashioned books is not, in this 'modernist', without affection). Canada, to which George escapes is 'the English shore'; England and Europe are the places 'where there is a mustering among the masses'; and her examples of those 'who often speak words more wisely descriptive of the true religious sentiment, than one whose life is governed by it' are Moore, Byron, Goethe. (There is little of the Puritan about Mrs. Stowe.) She and Mark Twain are, in this respect, at odds,— and yet complementary. Together they form a typical American anomaly: 'King Arthur in Uncle Tom's Cabin'.

And 'A Connecticut Yankee' is our second book. It is not the best of Twain, the satire misfires, but (or therefore) it is an interesting document. He is able to laugh at himself, at the Yankee, the 'theatrical', commercial, practical, 'spendthrift', and his homely philosophy: 'it is the little conveniences that make the real comfort of life'. But self-mockery does not last long; there is bigger game: British society, Royalty, manners, dress, economics, religion. And language. He is sensitive to words: 'words realize nothing, vivify nothing to you, unless you have suffered in your own person the thing which the words try to describe', but his usage is slack. He becomes Editor of the newspaper and turns it into a Middle Western one. The book itself is punctuated with 'of courses' and 'no doubts', which might be, but are not, further digs at the Yankee. 'I had read Tom Jones and Roderick Random and other books of that kind', (is not his book of 'than kind'? eighteenth century picaresque?) and knew that the highest and first ladies and gentlemen in England had remained little or no cleaner in their talk, and... [in] morals and conduct *which such talk implies*, clear up to a hundred years ago'. (My italics). 'The truth is, Alisande, the archaics are a little *too* simple, the vocabulary is too limited, and so, by consequence, descriptions suffer in the matter of variety; they run too much to level Saharas of fact and not enough

to picturesque detail; this throws about them a certain air of the monotonous . . . ' (The 'Saharas of fact' might be Sir Thomas Browne).

The satire fails because of the disconnection between the historical setting and the contemporary relevance, or because of their muddle. Never the twain do meet, unless each blurs the other. It is not satirical, and has not the bite of satire. There is not the power of, say, Goldsmith's 'Citizen of the World', the work upon which Twain had based his 'Goldsmith's Friend Abroad Again' (1870). Twain had not this 'citizenship'; he was too provincial. He writes fantasy, intending burlesque, and the fantasist himself is fascinated. If there is irony in the book it is that the Yankee's mockery boomerangs and hits himself. It might be considered as much a part of the 'American-in-Europe' genre as anything of Henry James.

A word about Hawthorne's attitude to England. It is covert and all the more interesting for being so. An Englishness is hidden in 'The House of Seven Gables' at there were coins: 'there was undoubtedly an immense treasure of English guineas hidden somewhere about the house, or in the cellar, or possibly in the garden'. But he tires of this cramping Englishness (richness?) as Emerson, as we shall see, did also. Uncle Venner advises the new shopkeeper to 'shove back all English halfpence and base copper tokens, such as are very plenty about town'; Phoebe finds 'a cookery book, full of innumerable old fashions of English dishes'; an English relative is 'foreign bred'. The novels of Hawthorne are very much in the English tradition, and there is a (consequent?) air of frustration about them. The United States, he says in the Preface to the 'Marble Faun' is a country, 'where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery . . . not anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight'. He was obliged to manufacture the shadows, the antiquities and the mysteries, and rather heavy-handedly; they *are* manufactured.

'Indeed the American continent seemed so vast and so various that it both challenged and defeated efforts to encompass it, or to get to its heart or essence', and, Hoffmann^v adds, the preoccupation with 'the great American novel' hindered more than it helped the development of American fiction. Melville, like Hawthorne, searches for an

American Shakespeare: (the search for an EPOS, for absolutism, for *standards*?) : 'And who was he,— who but the Master Genius for whom our country is looking anxiously into the mist of Time, as destined to fulfill the great mission of creating our American literature, hewing it, as it were, out of the unwrought granite of our intellectual quarries? From him, whether moulded in the form of an epic poem or assuming a guise altogether new as the spirit itself may determine, we are to receive our first great original work which shall do all that remains to be achieved for our glory among the nations'. Melville thought he had found the 'Master Genius' in Hawthorne, but he was mistaken. His was the 'first original work' of America, but, in some ways, it is neither original nor American. There is its strength. 'Moby Dick', as Forster said, is 'a contest. The rest is song'.

'Master Genius' sounds like Carlyle; it echoes the 'Hero'. This is not accidental. It is small wonder that his influence upon the nineteenth century American writers was so pervasive: their hopes were his prophesy. Emerson writes to Carlyle: 'To the General in Chief from his Lieutenant'. He knew his roots: 'I go to Shakespeare, Goethe, Swift, *even* to Tennyson, submit myself to them, become merely *an organ of hearing* and yield to the law of their being' (My italics). He saw the lack: 'In America I grieve to miss the strong black blood of the English race; ours is a pale diluted stream... Our American lives are somewhat poor and pallid, no fiery grain; staid men, like our pale and timid flora... The Englishman speaks with all his body. His elocution is stomachic,— as the American's is labial'. (The first clause might be Arnold). 'We have our culture... from Europe, and are Europeans' is, however, not the statement of a satisfied man. His 'Representative Men' are Heroes, and not particularly representative.

Thoreau was made of stronger stuff, but was less American; he was 'constantly making amends for the accident that made him a colonial and not an aboriginal', living in the woods or going to prison for his rights. Emerson visited him in prison, and said: 'Henry, why are you here?' Thoreau replied: 'Why are you *NOT* here?' There is the difference. Thoreau went to the woods,— but he took his books. (He is not unlike Ruskin, whom he quotes: 'Life being very short, and

the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them reading valueless books, and valuable books should, in a civilised country, be within the reach of everyone'). 'For what are the classics but the noblest recorded thoughts of man?'. Set aside this statement with the following (also from 'Walden') and the basic incongruity appears: 'Some are dinning into our ears that we Americans, and moderns generally, are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients, or even even the Elizabethan men. But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion'. (His style gives him away: notice the flabby 'and moderns generally' and 'even the Elizabethan men'; notice the central evasion in the (unfortunate) rhetorical question; notice the irony of the concluding, *classical* aphorism).

Emerson, then, was 'an organ of hearing', Thoreau a voice whimpering in the wilderness. The shouting was left to Whitman. And, as we have heard, he could shout. There is no one louder, but he could also whimper: 'So far, our democratic society... possesses nothing... to make up for that glowing, blood throbbing, religious, social, emotional, artistic, indefinable, indescribably beautiful charm and hold which fused the separate parts of the old feudal societies together, in their wonderful interpenetration in Europe and Asia, of love, belief and loyalty, running like a living weft and picturesque responsibility, duty and blessedness, running like a warp the other way'. This is from 'Democratic Vistas', published in 1890. So the 'so far' is a little ironical. It was all over bar the shouting.

But the English could shout,—quietly. They awaited the new American literature,—in vain. The 'Times' called for it, and when faced with J. R. Lowell, could only say: 'he is no more American than a Newdigate prizemen'. And Sidney Smith concluded, too rashly, in the 'Edinburgh Review': 'Literature the Americans have none—no native literature we mean. It is all imported... But why should the Americans write books, when a six week's passage brings them, in our own tongue, our sense, science and genius, in bales and hogsheads'. (Our warning of this kind of attitude needs to be heeded here). The English at this time were 'authoritarians in revolt against forces... destroying the remnants of a benevolent feudal system which had receiv-

ed its deathblow in the French Revolution, but which they think could be revived in an improved version'. The Americans were 'libertarian-individualists with faith in the regeneration of the social system by practical goodwill and virtue'. That explains much, but not all. For a clearer understanding of the failure we must glance at American education.

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'Education has therefore to steer its way between the Scylla of giving the instincts free play and the Charybdis of frustrating them' (Freud; quoted Herbert Read: 'Art and Society').

'America', said Edward Hingston, 'is a lecture-hall on a very extensive scale. The rostrum extends in a straight line from Boston, through New York and Philadelphia to Washington. There are raised seats on the first tier in the Alleghanies, and gallery accomodation on the top of the Rocky Mountains... the voice of the lecturer is never silent in the United States'. And, from the evidence, more's the pity. His voice is all-too-familiar. (This voice is Mark Twain's 'There is no such thing as 'the Queen's English'. The property has gone into the hands of a joint stock company and we own the bulk of the shares'). And that voice is heard beyond the fifty odd states. (A reference here to Lowes Dickinson's 'Letters from John Chinaman' may not be without point. He noted as early as 1913 that 'the Chinese educated in America ... were exactly like American undergraduates. Their whole mentality, so far as I could see, was American... On the other hand, those educated in England were comparatively critical, sober and cautious...') American standards in education are, except at the very highest level, abysmal. It may be a physiological handicap in the white American because 'Kaffirs, Japanese, American Indians, Eskimos, and Polynesians all have brains larger than his'.^{vi} But may be not. Whatever the reasons, the American himself would agree that whereas aristocracy educates the few, democracy succeeds in half educating the mass. So Richard Altick, in his 'Scholar Adventurers' (1950): 'a surprising number of our American scholars if confronted with the record, would have to confess that they misspent their undergraduate years majoring in such subjects as business administration'.

Behind the braggadocio ('there are two universities in England, four in France, ten in Prussia and thirty-seven in Ohio') is the hollowness: the quiz-examinations, the chatty 'coffee-and-sympathy' seminars, the doctorates of Cosmetology, the 'but-what-have-you-published?' test for teachers, the treating of the students as potential delinquents rather than as a potential scholars, the teaching of teaching, not teaching, the sport-fellowships. One reason for all this absurdity is the pernicious emphasis on practical education, in itself a contradiction in terms. This goes far back. It can be seen in Franklin: he speaks of the study of languages: 'I would therefore offer it to those who superintend the education of our youth, whether, since many of those who begin with the Latin quit the same after spending some years without having made any great proficiency, and what they have learnt becomes almost *useless*, so that their time has been lost, it would not have been better to have begun with the French, proceeding to the Italian *etc.*, for, though after spending the same time they should quit the study of languages and never arrive at the Latin, they would however have acquired *another tongue or two, that, being in modern use, might be servicable to them in common life*' (My italics).

'Useless' strikes a bell, or knell, that 'summons me from thee to my sole self'. Its echo is found in Bertrand Russell's essay, 'Useless Knowledge', in the collection called, perhaps significantly, 'In Praise of Idleness'. Russell says: 'perhaps the most important advantage of 'useless' knowledge is that it promotes a contemplative habit of mind', and his words are part of the classical tradition. They have their counterpart in Socrates, who, in the 'Protagoras', advises his disciples: 'Why may you not learn of him (the teacher) in the same way that you learned the arts of the grammarian or musician or trainer, not with a view of making any of them a profession but only as a part of education, and because a private gentlemen ought to know them'?

The whole question resolves itself into the American's place in the tradition, or a tradition. His root weakness is not that he broke completely with the classical tradition of Europe or that he established a modern one in America. *He did neither*. Between two stools he falls to the ground. He half-heard the warnings of his own educators and

thinkers. Dewey, for instance: 'the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own end', or Babbitt; 'Tocqueville remarks that the contempt for antiquity is one of the chief dangers of a democracy, and adds with true insight that the study of the classics, therefore, has special value for a democratic community'. But perhaps the sensible man cannot expect to be heard in a democracy where there is no room for the 'vividier' man. As Mencken says, in a democracy, 'one finds an outlawry and corruption of the best'. (This may be why Stevenson was not elected President. Mencken, incidentally goes on to speak of the President: 'his notion of a good time was to refresh himself in the manner of a small-town Elk, at golf, poker and guzzling... there is no evidence that he is acquainted with a single intelligent man'. (He refers to Harding. Eisenhower, of course, plays bridge).

How does the American writer live in this democracy? Usually, of course, he does not. He leaves; the line of American literary expatriates is long and distinguished. O'Neill speaks for the 'stay-at-home' dramatists: 'It (Mourning Becomes Electra) needed great language to lift it beyond itself. I haven't got that. And, by way of self-consolation, I don't think, from the evidence of all that is being written today, that great language is possible for anyone living in the discordant, broken, faithless rhythm of our time. The best one can do is to be pathetically eloquent by one's moving, dramatic inarticulations'. Since that time one has heard these 'dramatic inarticulations' (Miller, Williams etc.,) some more moving than others. For the novelists, Lionel Trilling speaks: 'American fiction has nothing to show like the huge, swarming, substantial population of the European novel, the substantiality of which is precisely a product of a class existence'.^{vii} In other words, Democracy may be government of the people, by the people, for the people, but great art is produced in spite of the people. 'Toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre' (Chamfort). Or Lady Gregory, speaking for the founders of the Irish Dramatic Movement: 'We gave what we thought was good until it became popular'.

It is but a stepping-stone to England.

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Sarah (shouting after her son): 'You'll die, you'll die,—if you don't care, you'll die'. (He pauses at the door). 'Ronnie, if you don't care you'll die.' (He turns slowly to face her). (The end of 'Chicken Soup with Barley' by Arnold Wesker (1958)).

And in England we find as similar a situation as in America. If the United States has its 'Lonely Crowd', England has its 'Uses of Literacy'. But in England the situation is not so bad,—yet. The cancer is being checked 'by an aristocratic tradition, an anachronism, true enough, but still extremely powerful, and yielding to the times only under pressure'. The young English writers, the heirs of Pound, Lawrence and Eliot have reacted against this tradition and all its trappings as our 'individual talents' reacted against the Victorians. (Or thought they did). The Royal Family, to John Osborne, is the 'gold-filling in a mouthful of decay', the Church of England's chewing the cud of theological niceties has been 'The Making of Moo'. But there has also been a turning away from democracy. The characters in an Osborne play or an Amis novel are the *déracinés* of democracy, 'the post-war fund-aided. . .' who are permitted to undergo an educational process hitherto much restricted, (but). . . only on sufferance'. It is the same with the writers themselves: democracy and democratic education have wrenched them from their true place in society, and put them, generally speaking, half a class higher. This is an uncomfortable and sometimes precarious perch; they are between classes, nowhere, *Judes the Exposed*. The work of these new writers is, therefore, intensely class-conscious, and from all sides comes the cry for authority and a hierarchy. Colin Wilson is in the fascist tradition: his 'outsiders' are Carlyle's 'heroes', even perhaps, Lawrence's 'vivid men'. John Braine is half-Irish and Catholic and looks to the Church for his comfort; there is something above, even above the room at the top: 'religion is necessary because there must be a firm authority for morality'.

Amis' characters escape from the strictures of democracy in tomfoolery. When a girl asks 'Lucky Jim' histrionically: 'Do you love me, James?' he is flooded with the desire 'to rush at her and tip her backwards in the chair, to make a deafening rude noise in her face, to push a bead up her nose'. And there is occasion when John Lewis,

(in 'That Uncertain Feeling' 1955), goes to an upper-class party, and considers making 'a renewed effort to be marked down as 'impossible', bawl a defence of the Welfare State, start undressing myself or the dentist's mistress, give the dentist a lovely piggy-back round the room, call for a toast to the North Korean Foreign Minister or Comrade Malenkov'. There is a hint of Sterne here, (though Amis possibly has never read him), and a freshness and spontaneity. But the novelty soon wears off; the novel, after all is something more than anecdote. And it is doubtful whether this picaresque of the nonsensical can have much permanency.

One who has this freshness and spontaneity and who is quite likely to be of more permanent interest than Amis is Iris Murdoch. One moment of such spontaneity is when the young girl in 'Flight from the Enchanter' swings from the chandelier of her school room. And this has a natural place in the book, it triggers the action. Spontaneity in the novel is (now) not uncommon, but an absence of the episodic is. Here Miss Murdoch shows her superiority. Her character's spontaneity is more natural and more acceptable than that of Amis', not so much because she is describing the zest of youth and he the jaded 'hell-of-it' behaviour of approaching middle age, but because she has a definite attitude, (she teaches philosophy at Oxford) a certain distance, (she is half-Irish) and, most important, a deeper concern and seriousness. One of the characters in the same book says: 'If the gods kill us, it is not for their sport, but because we fill them with such an intolerable compassion, a sort of nausea. Do you ever feel. . .as if everything in the world needed your—protection? It is a terrible feeling. Everything,—even this matchbox'. There, (if I may suggest), is the teacher's gift of exploring the unknown from the known, (the Lear reference), the proportion ('everything. . .this matchbox') and the concern. Here seems to be someone who, like George Eliot, may revivify the novel with teaching.

The epigraph to this section is from a play by one of the many post-*Osborne* dramatists who are at this moment making the English stage the most exciting and significant in the world. Mr. Wesker must be considered with his contemporaries, for he is as yet not fully matured. (A very useful collection has come from Penguin, a collection 'New

English Dramatists' which has this play of Wesker, 'Each his own Wilderness' by Doris Lessing and 'The Hamlet of Stepney Green' by Bernard Kops). The influences seem to be Osborne and Beckett, but they have more in them than these. Both Kops and Wesker take as their subject the Jewish colony of London, a small segment of society. They avoid, as a consequence, the sweeping generalisations of Osborne,—and democracy. All three concern the relationships between the younger generation and the older, children and parents. On the one hand there is, from Beckett, the sense of futility. But there is more than this. 'Why do I feel ashamed to use words like democracy and freedom and brotherhood' says the adolescent to his mother in Wesker's play, 'They don't have meaning any more. . . You're a pathological case, Mother,—do you know that? You're still a *Communist* ! . . .' This whole last scene is significant, and we already know the answer she gives: 'If you don't care you'll die'. The boy turns in recognition, a spiritual anagnorisis, but this turn, this care and concern will be for something other than democracy. Someone.

Kenneth Allsop (from whose 'Angry Decade', I have taken some of my references in this section) concludes with this about the '50's: 'I think he (a man in 1984) will see a sensitive, emotional intelligent, but wretchedly neurotic society, obedient to protocol beneath the exhibitionist 'rebelling' and obsessively class-conscious. For this seems to me the most ironical paradox of all. Britain put itself through a straightening-out process of democratisation and economic levelling, and has come out at the other end with many of the old values still intact, in a different place and slightly exacerbated by the disruption, which might be likened to trying to flatten a bump in linoleum; when you look round it's heaved up behind you, and anyway the pattern is exactly the same'. I have tried to show that this is, in fact, no paradox at all. 'Straightening-out' reminds one of death, and the exacerbations seem to me to give life, are life. The American 'pattern' is different. We must concern ourselves once more with its phrenological, (not socio-logical) 'bumps'.

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'America which had the chance of being the birthplace of a New

World, may yet be the death-bed of the Old' (Holbrook Jackson).

The American, luckily, is not easily defined. On the one hand, there is Mark Twain: 'Let us be thankful for the fools. But for them the rest of us could not succeed'. On the other, Henry James: 'We work in the dark, we do what we can—we give what we have, Our doubt is our passion, and our passion is our task. The rest is the madness of art'. Both attitudes seem to meet in Thoreau, the Thoreau of 'I am under the awful necessity to be what I am', and the Thoreau of 'I, in my folly, am the world I condemn'. One is likely to weary least of James. One would like more doubt, more passion, more madness. In the 'Madonna of the Future', he said: 'An American to excel has just ten times as much to learn as a European. We lack the deeper sense; we have neither taste, nor force. How should we have them? Our crude and garish climate, our silent past, our deafening present, the constant pressure about us of unlovely circumstance, are as void of all that nourishes and prompts and inspires the artist as *my sad heart is void of bitterness in saying so*' (My italics).

Gossips crowd to be heard. Ladies first. In a recent interview, (significantly called 'Who are the Americans?') the distinguished American anthropologist, Margaret Mead was asked whether she thought America was capable of world-leadership. She replied: 'In a sense that's almost an academic question. If we were looking for world-leadership and the rest of the world had several candidates, then they might ask the question and decide to give leadership to this country or that. We're more or less *trapped* in a situation where at least a certain portion of world leadership has got to fall to the United States. So I think a more useful question is to say: 'What *kind* of world leadership is the United States capable of?' (Italics mine). We too are asking the same question. America has the choice to make. We might say: 'America which *has* the chance of being the birthplace of a New World...' were it not for the temptation of falling into the trap of an Arnoldian 'out-with-a-bang' conclusion. But we may say so. We are still Victorians and these are early days.

The second gossip, (in the order of the social standing), is Lord Kinross, and the points (discussed by Raymond Mortimer) arising from

his study of America, 'The Innocents at Home'. 'This desire (of the Americans) to please seems to me a laudable trait, too seldom apparent in England; but it is now causing sad distress among Americans. They are dismayed by reports of their unpopularity as a people even in the countries they have helped most lavishly. (Why 'even'?) In vain one points out that the richest, most powerful nation in the world is bound to excite envy and resentment, that when we English held this position we were detested—and didn't give a damn. The Americans continue to feel bewildered and hurt.

'If they are more grossly misjudged than we ever were, they have chiefly themselves to blame. In the remotest countries, their Information Offices provide the facts about the American way of life; but in the same places films portray, more persuasively and to a far larger public, the United States as a pandemonium of sexuality, ostentation and violence. The Russians need spend no money on anti-American propaganda: Hollywood does the job for them, and much better than they could'. (My parentheses).

Thirdly, he who began our gossip, a man nearer home,—E. M. Forster: 'I distrust Great Men... I believe in aristocracy, though—if that is the right word, and if a democrat may use it. Not an aristocracy of power based upon rank and influence, but an aristocracy of the sensitive, the considerate and the plucky' ('Two Cheers for Democracy').

Last and least: there may be a choice between literature and democracy. There may not. But there is need of change:

'How much shall I be chang'd

Before I am changed'.

And then there were none.

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References

- i. cf. 'The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot' Hugh Kenner. (McDowell and Obolensky, New York 1959).
- ii. 'Walt Whitman's Concept of the American Common Man' (Philosophical Library, New York, 1955) Leadie N. Clark p. 108. (I owe this reference

and the quotaion (iv) to a reading of the graduation thesis of Mr. Hiroshi Tanaka.

- iii. also, one might add, the beginnings of English literary criticism with the correspondence between Gabriel Harvey and Sir Philip Sidney, and the first Elizabethan tragedy (Marlowe of Corpus Christi) and the performing of secular comedy (by the undergraduates of St. John's).
- iv. See ii (above).
- v. 'The Modern Novel in America' F. J. Hoffmann 1951. Hoffmann says by the way; 'But we are no longer in a position where we need refer to Henry James as our only serious critical student of the art (of the novel)'. I disagree. And so, really, perhaps, does Hoffmann. Other 'serious critical students' (Forster, Liddell, Muir etc.) are only mentioned in his Bibliography. And half of his references to Lubbock's 'Craft of Fiction' seem to be irrelevant. Who, if anyone, can he be thinking of?
- vi. see , The Natural History of Nonsense' by Bergen Evans (1947) p. 149.
- vii. Quoted by Alvarez in his 'The Shaping Spirit'. (For export to the United States the title of his book was changed to 'Stewards of Excellence'. Why? The answer, if there is one, might be interesting).

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I must acknowledge the debt I owe to some other books, especially to Van Wyck Brooks' 'Makers and Finders: a History of the Writer 'in America 1800—1915', (particularly the first four volumes). a work enormous in scope and significance; to Holbrook Jackson's 'Dreamers of Dreams' (1948) and to Tillotson's 'Criticism and the Nineteenth Century' (1951).